

331
169a

361.9744
eq

ADDRESS

DELIVERED AT THE

TWENTY-SECOND TRIENNIAL FESTIVAL

OF THE

MASSACHUSETTS

CHARITABLE MECHANIC ASSOCIATION,

October 21, 1872,

BY HENRY W. WILSON.

3724

BOSTON:

WRIGHT & POTTER, PRINTERS,

19 PROVINCE STREET.

1872.

ADDRESS

DELIVERED AT THE

TWENTY-SECOND TRIENNIAL FESTIVAL

OF THE

MASSACHUSETTS

CHARITABLE MECHANIC ASSOCIATION,

October 21, 1872,

BY HENRY W. WILSON.

BOSTON:
WRIGHT & POTTER, PRINTERS,
19 PROVINCE STREET.

1872.



331
W69a

MECHANICS' HALL,

BOSTON, Oct. 30th, 1872.

HENRY W. WILSON, Esq.

DEAR SIR,

I am directed, by a vote of the Government of the Massachusetts Charitable Mechanic Association, to present the sincere thanks of the Association for the eloquent and instructive address delivered at the celebration of the Twenty-second Triennial Festival, and to request a copy at your earliest convenience for publication.

I am, very truly yours,

JOSEPH L. BATES,

Secretary.

190 DORCHESTER STREET,

BOSTON, Oct. 30th, 1872.

DEAR SIR,

Enclosed you will please find the copy of my address, agreeably to the request of the Board of Government, with many thanks for the complimentary allusion to my unpretending efforts.

I remain, very truly,

HENRY W. WILSON.

J. L. BATES, Esq.,

Secretary, M.C.M.A.

MAR 26 1954

ALDEN

Letter + Index Rel 21 Aug 47 Aldine



Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2018 with funding from
University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign Alternates

ADDRESS.

Seventy-four years ago, a little company of twenty-nine members of this Association assembled in the Old Green Dragon Tavern, famous for its Revolutionary associations, and celebrated what was, in reality, its first triennial festival, as it was its third anniversary.

The records state that they "sat down to a well-provided table, and fared sumptuously;" toasts were read, "which, being so completely adapted to the occasion, were received with eclat, and interspersed with songs." The sumptuousness or economy of this entertainment can best be appreciated when it is understood that the entire expense did not exceed nine shillings, New-England currency, for each person.

The Association had, at that time, been in existence but little more than three years; no new members had been admitted during the year 1798, although 33 had been admitted subsequently to the signing of the original constitution,—not all of whom, however, had complied with its requirements,—who, together with the original 83 members, gave a total of 116 persons entitled to membership from the first formation of the society; still, by withdrawals, the number of active members had been reduced to 90. There is no

record of the financial condition of the Association for that year; but at the previous annual meeting the total funds in the hands of the treasurer amounted to but $\$312\frac{50}{100}$, and the secretary's salary, which had previously been fixed at \$50, was reduced to \$20.

There was nothing at that time in the brief history of the Association, or in the promise of its future prosperity, which could have been flattering or assuring; originally intended as a temporary means of self-defence against abuses incident to the trades, it had resulted in a consolidated organization of tradesmen, which was viewed with suspicion and distrust by the mercantile and professional classes, who thought they saw in it a combination to advance the cost of all the products of labor. Mechanics, not members of the Association, looked upon it with more or less of jealousy, arising from an ill-defined apprehension of possible adverse influences which it might exert upon their business or interests; while even its members could hardly be said to have dwelt together in unity. As our chronicler mildly states the situation, "the society was not at that time a popular institution, and the members themselves were not in a state of the most peaceful harmony."

Such were some of the discouragements under which our predecessors met, three-fourths of a century ago, and forgot their embarrassments amid toasts and songs, with the good cheer of mine host of the Green Dragon. If they could make the occasion one of feasting and rejoicing, how much more should we, who, after such an interval of time, witness

the results of their small beginnings, and enjoy the fruits of the tree they planted and nourished. The continued existence of the Association, which was then a problem, has long since ceased to be a matter even of doubt or apprehension. Our membership has increased from 90 to 831; the ordinary annual receipts of the treasury have swelled from less than \$200 to \$20,000, and its assets, which were but \$300, now exceed, at a moderate valuation, \$300,000 above all indebtedness. Its disbursements for relief, which commenced in 1799, by the payment of \$10 "to the family of John Keith, a deceased mechanic, not a member," have steadily grown, until the distributions by the relief committee of the past year amounted to \$4,982; and although the records are imperfect, there is abundant evidence that the total sum so distributed since the commencement, amounts to more than \$60,000.

The operations of this committee are conducted with marked fidelity, and yet so quietly and unostentatiously that they are often overlooked in the midst of more stirring though not more important affairs. The delicacy with which this relief is administered is equalled only by its unstinted liberality; and a most excellent, though inadequate conception of its extent and usefulness is afforded by the annual report of the committee, submitted to the Association, July 10, 1872. By this report, it appears that the whole number receiving aid, July 1, 1871, was 47
 Added during the year, 2

agreeably to the provisions of our constitution, since 1802, when "\$40 was paid to Peter Makintosh, brother of John, a deceased member," the aggregate sum of \$27,725.75.

For educational purposes since 1828, when \$175 was voted to defray the expense of a course of lectures, up to the last year, when the sum of \$1,473.50 was expended in sustaining the apprentices' school, there has been paid more than \$30,000, and for the assistance of the Mechanics' Apprentices' Library Association, about \$7,000 more, making a total of \$37,000, which is a near approximation to the aggregate paid for the education and training of apprentices. Minor sums for miscellaneous purposes of a kindred nature would swell the aggregate disbursements of the Association for relief and education to at least \$100,000.

This remarkable increase in material resources and means of usefulness which we now contemplate, is largely, if not almost wholly, the result of the self-denying labors and good management of some who are assembled with us here to-day, and who have guided the affairs of the Association for the past twenty-five years, during which time the most important of these results have been achieved; and while they can but afford us the liveliest feelings of satisfaction, still we are to accept and mingle with our mutual congratulations, a consciousness of new duties and enlarged responsibilities.

From a feeble and timid organization of mechanics who wrought with their own hands, at their several trades, among their workmen and apprentices, we have grown to be a corporation with large powers and great wealth, with a prestige

which has never been weakened, and is of itself a power, composed of men who singly control and manage business concerns of a magnitude greater than that of the aggregate of all its members in its earliest years. It has combined and represented the manufacturing interests to a very large extent, and furnished almost the only instance, in this country, where a series of general expositions of the arts and manufactures have been successfully and satisfactorily conducted. We have cared for the distressed of our own household and their families, and a great deal has been done — perhaps not all that could or ought to have been done, still it was all that appeared to be reasonable or proper at the time — to aid in the instruction and training of mechanics' apprentices.

The promotion of good fellowship by festivals and reunions has become a recognized feature of our Association, and the recurring seasons of enjoyment are anticipated with pleasure, and do much to preserve a fraternal feeling among our members.

But what are some of the duties and responsibilities which are brought upon us, as the consequence of so much prosperity and the possession of so many of the means of usefulness? Let us consider one, which was the occasion of that first meeting in January, 1795, which was undoubtedly the germ from which our Association has sprung. The call for that meeting was addressed to tradesmen, to consider the subject of securing legislation relating to apprentices; the evils they proposed to remedy, were those incident to any

people upon emerging from a protracted war, and endeavoring to repair its waste and destruction, — restlessness, and insubordination under wholesome restraint, and unwillingness to fulfil a contract after its substantial advantages had been attained. We have seen the same in our own day, and they were doubtless then the more annoying because previously comparatively unknown. At intervals since, the subject has forced itself upon the attention of the Association; but there is no record of any action taken or result accomplished; and, with all our achievements, the simple question which was asked so long ago is still unsolved, and the matter remains in the same uncertainty, but in a worse position, than it did seventy-five years ago. With nearly 280,000 persons engaged in the mechanic arts and manufactures, less than 2,500 are returned as apprentices, where there should be at least 25,000.

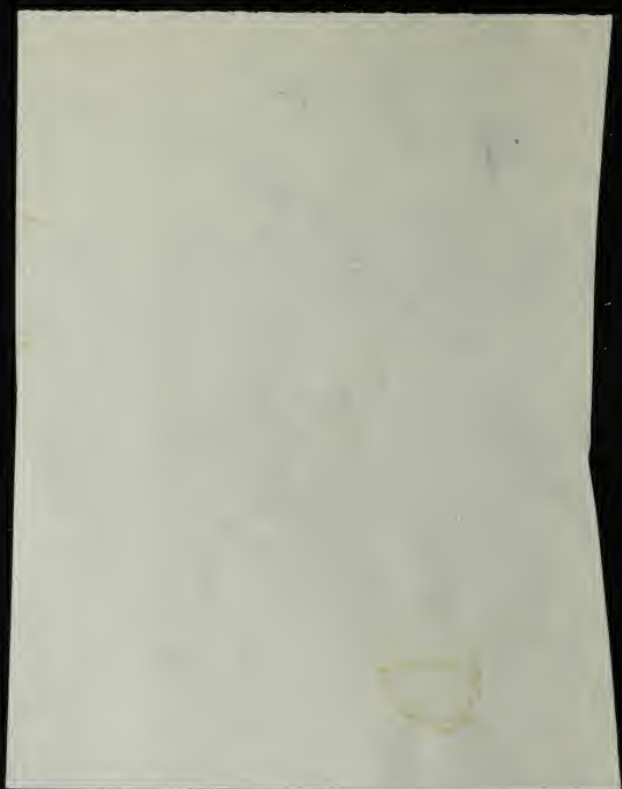
By improved processes and inventions, the operations and products of machinery have been carried to a surprising degree of perfection, while individual excellence and skill challenge our admiration; but in those branches of trade which we may properly term the domestic trades, as they concern our domestic life and comfort, in the construction of our houses and the production of their furniture, utensils, and appliances, — in these trades, the reduction in the number of careful, skilful workmen has been continual and annoying. The great and embarrassing want of many of our most important trades to-day, is that of educated apprentices, to qualify themselves to fill the places that are fast being vacated

by our journeymen and master mechanics. The evils of which our predecessors complained in regard to their apprentices were removed — but it was at the cost of the system, and by not having any apprentices at all. The superior immediate inducements afforded by some departments of manufactures ; the tempting allurements of traffic and speculation ; the demands of our internal commerce, which has been called into existence during the past generation ; the urgent demands for labor, skilled or unskilled, even if it is only physical force directed by ordinary intelligence, added to the natural disinclination of young persons to undergo the training essential to proficiency in any branch, whether of science or art, — these causes have operated to break down and almost destroy the old system of apprenticeship, which must be substantially revived again, if we would not give over all of our mechanical employments to untrained and unskilful men.

Our Association owes it to itself, the community in which it has flourished, and the very name which it has assumed, that it should aid in investigations and efforts, and cause them to be made to elevate the standard of skill, intelligence, training, and domestic comfort of mechanics and the operatives of our mechanical and manufacturing establishments. We owe it to those who are to come after us, that we maintain the standard of excellence in the mechanic arts.

Our members in their several callings have been foremost in urging on the mighty mechanical revolutions which have so far distinguished the nineteenth century. The application of steam to machinery and transportation, and that of elec-

Put in
envelope



tricity to the transmission of intelligence, have produced a concentration of population, and furnished the means of supplying them to a degree that is surprising and even startling. The population of the State in 1800 was 423,245 ; in 1830, it had increased to 610,408, by the regular ratio common to an agricultural people.

At this period manufacturing was of small or no account, the chief productive occupations of the people being agriculture and the fisheries ; and, although it is difficult to ascertain the maximum amount of population that a given area will sustain by agriculture alone, still, in the year 1830, with a population of $78\frac{25}{100}$ to the square mile, which is twice the density of the present population of either of the States of Maine, New Hampshire, or Vermont, Massachusetts had probably arrived at the stated point of density ; since which time all the growth of her population, now amounting to 846,000 persons, whether by immigration or natural increase, must seek their subsistence by some of the numerous branches of artificial industry which the demands of society and civilization have created.

By the rate of natural increase from 1800 to 1830, the population should have been, in 1870, about 926,000 ; the difference between which number and the present population, or 531,000, is the increase since 1830 by immigration from neighboring States or foreign countries, attracted by the superior opportunities for advancement afforded by our institutions and our varied industries.

According to the census of 1870, the population of the

State has increased to 1,457,351; of whom 19,000 gained their livelihood on the sea, 67,550 by tilling the soil, and 279,380 by mechanical industry, — being an increase, in ten years, of 1,500 farmers and farm laborers, 3,000 mariners, and 63,000 engaged in manufacturing pursuits.

The annual value of farm produce amounted to \$32,192,378, against \$21,556,162 in 1855, — an increase of \$10,636,216 in fifteen years.

The value of industrial products was \$553,912,568, against \$266,000,000 in 1860. Deducting the value of the raw materials, we have, as the actual net profit of the manufacturer, including wages, \$219,498,586 in 1870, against \$125,000,000 in 1860, — an increase of \$94,000,000, or $75\frac{2}{10}$ per cent., with an increased number of mechanics and operatives of only $29\frac{3}{10}$ per cent.

This large and increasing army of artisans and laborers is silently but surely moulding the destiny of the State, and changing the character and habits of our people. They contribute to the general comfort and well-being; they provide for our simplest wants and necessities, as well as minister to taste and refinement; the peace and security of the household, as well as the honor and dignity of the nation; the development and diffusion of knowledge, by the means of communication and transportation from one part of the country to the other, are becoming more and more dependent upon their enterprise, skill, and integrity.

It is to this swelling multitude of toilers that we, as an Association, owe one of our greatest responsibilities. They

are the producers, and by their labor comes the increase. It is not a matter of argument that success in business depends upon the manner in which it is conducted; but it is equally true, that good policy and sound judgment both dictate that, in a manufacturing community, every reasonable effort should be made to elevate the moral and social standard of those who toil. It will bring its compensation in the additional security of life and property; in an increased production, and consequent gain in wealth; and in a greater stability in the condition of the community, which arises from and grows with the general happiness, contentment, and well-being. But should that standard be suffered to abate, the evils to be precipitated upon us will be bitter, and our regrets unavailing.

The developments of improved processes, and the creation of new branches of industry, or radical changes in the methods of business, will sometimes work temporary embarrassments and losses to other interests or communities.

We cannot escape the inevitable consequences if we try. We may seek to control, we may guide them somewhat, but the revolution goes on, and there is nothing left for us but to abide the result, and adapt our methods of life and business to the new order of things.

Consider the case of Nantucket, for an example of the effect of the development of new and improved processes, and the want of diversity in her industrial interests. Thirty years ago one hundred whalers were owned and fitted out at the island; to-day, not one. Then, all was bustle and activity about her wharves and yards; now, her wharves are

falling to decay, her factories and buildings have been profitably removed to the mainland. She made whaling the one pursuit upon which her prosperity depended ; a few experiments in a chemist's laboratory, changes in the means of transportation, and the oil wells of Pennsylvania, have done the work. Her population has diminished fifty per cent., being scarcely more than at the commencement of the Revolutionary war, and all for the want of a varied industry.

Out of these considerations, and the ineffectual effort to comprehend them, arise the vague notions that prevail concerning the relations which ought to exist between the employer and the employé, or, as it is incorrectly stated, between labor and capital ; for there is scarcely an employer or manufacturing company in the State that is not just as dependent upon the capitalist as the humblest laborer, while they are the first and greatest sufferers from whatever causes create unnecessary apprehension and alarm. Upon this question some well-meaning persons, and others whose intentions are not so good, have for years endeavored to create an issue under the name of Labor Reform.

We cannot permanently improve the condition of any class from without. Reforms, to be radical and successful, must be from within ; the application of the remedy must be internal and not external. No legal enactments can effectually correct abuses which arise from the prevailing habits and customs of the people, and which are not themselves amenable to law. Intemperance and vagrancy will never be removed from our midst by the operation of law, while it is considered social to

drink intoxicating liquors, and reputable to traffic in them as a beverage. No abundance of wages, or shortening of the hours of labor, can be productive of good to those with whom abundance is the incentive to extravagance, and leisure the opportunity for indolence, license, or excess.

Labor is the normal state of man's condition, and from it cometh health, plenty, and peace.

Whoever, being in health, labors not, is a drone; yet probably there never was a time in the history of this country when there was a greater disinclination to work at good, honest, productive toil than there is to-day. The spirit of unrest is deep-seated and wide-spread. It possesses both the thrifty and the thriftless: the one it urges to self-denial and the sacrifice of present comfort or enjoyment, that, sometime in the distant future, there may be realized the dream of an existence without labor; the other, while repining at his own ill fortune and the success of his neighbor, is only stimulated to work by his urgent necessities.

The causes which have led to this state of things are various: the convulsions and unsettling of established business relations, which have been so marked since the outbreak of the Rebellion, and were a natural consequence of a period of war and unreconciled peace; the spirit of speculation, destructive to the spirit of industry, and which is always produced by an unsettled state of values or credit; and, lastly, by a general individual prosperity, which is more wide-spread than is commonly admitted or even believed.

But, whatever the causes, or whatever the influences they

may exert upon human nature, it is the fact with which we have to deal, and for which we must devise a remedy. A series of resolutions which were recently adopted by a Labor-Reform Convention, commenced with this proposition : "Poverty is the great fact with which the Labor movement has to deal." This statement contains nothing new, as the amelioration of the condition of the poorer and destitute classes has always been the special solicitude of good government ; but it disregards in its statement another great fact, that, in this country, and more particularly in this State, unless in exceptional cases where it is the result of natural causes, poverty is almost always the offspring of indolence, ignorance, or intemperance. Indeed, it would be difficult to find a case of want and destitution, in which the primary cause was not one of these three.

The first is not indigenous to our people ; whatever else may be said of them, a want of activity is seldom to be laid to their charge. Ignorance is almost entirely an importation ; and intemperance, though common to all grades of society, is more generally prevalent among the foreign population.

In 1855, the number of persons in the Commonwealth who could neither read nor write was 27,539, or 2.25 per cent. of the population. In 1865, the number had increased to 50,110, or 3.95 per cent. of the population. This large number of illiterate persons was divided as follows : males, 19,134 ; females, 30,976.

Number of American birth, including children of foreign parentage : —

Males,	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	1,012
Females,	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	961
								<hr/> 1,973
Foreign born : —								
Males,	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	18,122
Females,	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	30,015
								<hr/> 48,137
								<hr/>
Total,	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	50,110

As the foreign population to the American population was only 20.95 per cent., these statistics carry their own conclusions.

Intemperance is a delicate subject with which to deal in an address upon a special topic, partly because of the strong feelings entertained upon both sides of the subject, when agitated as a political question ; partly, also, because many who clearly and honestly feel the evils which flow from the free use of intoxicating drinks, yet have among their pet weaknesses a lingering fondness for the "little brown jug." Yet any one who attempts to record or proclaim the moral condition of the mechanic classes, as they are to-day, must say that all the evils which they endure, combined, are not so harassing or vexatious to our master mechanics, or so disastrous and debasing to their workmen, as that of intemperance.

By a careful estimate, the total loss to the community in this State alone, from the cost of liquor uselessly consumed, the loss of productive labor while under its influence, and the destruction of property by its victims, amounts to nearly

\$15,000,000 annually, to say nothing of the loss of life, demoralization of society and business, suffering and destitution of outraged families, which are either directly or indirectly chargeable to the same account.

The conviction is gaining ground with many who have hitherto strenuously opposed what they termed sumptuary legislation, that no branch of mechanical industry would be tolerated or endured, which abstracted five dollars from the general resources for every dollar which it gained.

This corroding evil, which is the cause of more woe to the poorer classes than all other ills beside, must be met by kindness, firmness, and vigilance. We cannot entirely reform those now under its influence, though we must by all means save some, but by precept and example we must teach our children and youth to avoid those causes which lead so many to poverty, degradation, and death.

I can imagine gentlemen of elegant leisure and scholarly refinement looking out, occasionally, from their retirement, upon the scene of bustling activity which surrounds them, and, finding their philosophy unable to account for the rapid advance of manufactures, population, and wealth, retreating to their seclusion with doleful but well-meant admonitions at the sad havoc which a pushing and progressing people are making with the traditional habits and customs of the past generation.

Were I one of them, I could not better express my feelings than by language like this: "Where once 270,000 colonists tilled the soil and faced the sea, are now gathered a million

and a half of busy, bustling men, living in cities, working in factories, revelling in undreamed-of wealth, and struggling under harsh and hopeless poverty; a community becoming more and more sharply divided between those who have and those who have not; the responsibility and knowledge of government disappearing year by year with the old town meetings; ignorance and vice keeping steady pace with the increase of poverty, while the old, ominous class-cries of other lands and darker days grow yearly more familiar to our unaccustomed ears." *

This, as a general statement, would be sufficiently startling to arrest the attention; it is highly rhetorical, and reads beautifully; it is euphonious, and sounds elegantly; but the plain man who participates in these busy, bustling scenes would be puzzled to understand from what point of observation such a picture could be drawn. One would naturally infer that our farms are being abandoned and going to waste, that our sailors no longer go down to the sea in ships, while the furnace and the factory monopolize all the opportunities for toil, and furnish all the avenues to untold wealth.

Such a mode of statement is not ingenuous; it exaggerates and withholds the truth. The prominence which the old Bay State holds to-day in wealth and manufactures is the result of the same spirit of enterprise and indomitable energy which originally planted the colony on these sterile rocks, and sent its hardy sons to seek their fortune on the deep.

* Oration before the municipal authorities of Boston, July 4, 1872.

Our farmers, it is true, are unable with the ordinary methods and appliances, to compete with those who till their broad prairie farms of boundless fertility; but they have reduced the area of unproductive lands during the last twenty years by 218,514 acres, or 17.87 per cent.; increased the value of their farming implements and machinery \$1,791,295, or 55.8 per cent.; and find their annual products, by improved and thorough culture, increased in value \$10,636,216, or 49.4 per cent. A generation ago this would have been called wonderful progress; now it is overlooked in the glare of more glittering success.

It is true that special manufactures are not a safe basis upon which to establish the permanent prosperity of any community, while this would hardly hold with regard to a varied industry; but the limits of our State are circumscribed; the area of arable lands is still more limited — being less than two thirds of the whole, and the soil itself is not generally fertile. In view of these facts, no one can for a moment suppose that Massachusetts could sustain any considerable population from her own agricultural resources; and as we have already seen, she has long since passed the stated limit of her population, since when her increase must be of those engaged in industrial labor, or the State must cease her growth.

But we have found by the statistics of the State, that the number engaged in agricultural pursuits is steadily increasing, while languishing commerce and fruitless fisheries have not yet driven the sailor from his ship on the sea to the shop on

the shore ; waste lands are being reclaimed, and the unimproved acres of the State are thereby diminished, so that while a largely increased attention must of necessity be given to the mechanic arts, the cultivation of the soil is not disregarded, but is carried to a higher degree of perfection than in any other part of the land.

The poor we have always with us, and their needs, if distressing, should call forth our sympathy and assistance.

No disgrace attaches itself to honest poverty, which, though sometimes harsh, is never hopeless, except for the utterly degraded and depraved.

Among the coming glories of our institutions shines the star of hope undimmed by the deadening influences of caste or class, which are only cherished by the haughty and proud. The honest, industrious, contented poor of to-day, a few years hence may start their children in life upon a higher plane of usefulness and preferment ; it is the steady, substantial growth, generation after generation, that best indicates true culture and established society.

There are many who rise suddenly from indigence to affluence, or from obscurity to prominence, but they are not always successful, either in adapting themselves to their changed relations, or in retaining their wealth and influence in their families. Fortunes, suddenly made, become as suddenly broken.

But where are those lines so sharply drawn between those who have and those who have not ? Thousands yearly throng to our shores, sunk in poverty and wretchedness, escaping

from tyranny and oppression, with the hope and prospect of bettering their fortunes by joining the ranks of our toiling classes. Among them are doubtless some, — it would be strange if there were not, — who bring with them and sound the loudest those “ominous class-cries of other lands,” which so grate upon the ear of cultivated leisure and hereditary wealth; but, after making all due allowances for these, it will be found, upon investigation, that although property may be in some instances largely concentrated, it is also greatly diffused; its gradation, from these who have most to those who have least, is as regular now as it was a generation ago.

The whole number of legal voters in the State in 1870 * was 262,120; of these, 150,488, or 58 per cent., paid more than a poll-tax; in the city of Boston, the rate was somewhat less, amounting to 40 per cent.; of the remaining 111,632, who were assessed simply for a poll-tax, there are no means of ascertaining how many of them had their little accumulations snugly put away at interest, where the vigilance of the assessor would fail to find them; but the savings-banks returned the number of their depositors the same year at 560,000, with deposits amounting to \$163,000,000.

Thirty-five years of constant and intimate acquaintance with the very humblest and poorest of our people, and twenty-one years of active experience at a calling which affords continual knowledge of transactions in real property, have impressed me fully with the conviction that among the very

* Report of the Secretary of State, made February 11, 1870.

humblest of the laboring classes, the acquisition of homesteads is steadily increasing; not abodes assuming any degree of style, but houses plain, simple, and unpretending, oftentimes tasty, and far better than their owners had ever enjoyed before. To-day, the class of property most in request, and yielding the best and quickest returns to the builder, is the small, single house which can be sold at from \$2,000 to \$4,000, and the supply is not equal to the demand. Not long since I had occasion to lay off from a large estate one little lot, measuring only $14\frac{1}{2}$ feet front by 46 feet in depth, and containing only 667 square feet;—yet upon this lot was located a dwelling and a stable, furnishing a comfortable shelter for the proprietor, his wife, two grown sons, a horse, cow, and pig; the value of the property was perhaps \$500, and its owner was one of the happiest and most demonstrative of men, and proud of his homestead; frequently, when passing by, I have seen him deliberately pacing off its narrow front, and conning its boundaries, as if by some possibility encroachments might have occurred, as he naively phrased it, “unbeknown’t to him.”

Go into the humblest quarters of our cities and towns, and you may find whole streets of these modest dwellings of the independent poor, not many of them so small or so fully occupied as the case I have cited, but still so diminutive and narrow that many a sympathizing philanthropist who studies mankind downward rather than upward, wonders how the family could be accommodated in so cramped a space. My youthful head was sheltered by such an humble dwelling, and

nowhere have I found a more earnest spirit of inquiry into those matters that most deeply interest the citizen and taxpayer, or a more conservative regard for the rights of person and property.

In no surer way can we serve to protect the community from convulsions and political disorder, than by encouraging the acquisition of homesteads by the poor and laboring classes. It is a field that promises better results to the labors of the philanthropist, than stirring them up to feel that their poverty is a personal grievance, which can only be redressed by subverting the rights of property and obliging those who have, to share their goods with those who have not.

The old town meetings are disappearing year after year; and why? Because the people are sufficiently informed of the principles of self-government to know that a town organization is entirely inadequate to administer the affairs of a large community, or to properly and justly obtain the will of its citizens upon those interests which concern them most deeply; those men who will rally in the strongest numbers to vote the appropriation for a new engine-house, district school-house, or firemen's parade, yield the feeblest support to, and manifest the least interest in, those great sanitary measures, such as the maintenance of a water supply, or the establishment of an adequate system of sewerage, — without which a dense population cannot long be preserved from disease or pestilence.

Ignorance and vice do keep pace with the increase of poverty, but they are the cause and precursor, not the result

of it; could they be removed, continuous poverty would become unknown.

We are passing through social and political changes, which at any other epoch of our national existence would have been considered crises. The shock of civil war convulsed all grades of labor, and undoubtedly produced many of the changes which have increased our communities beyond all prediction or precedent. There still hangs over us the burden of debt which it entailed, representing simply the cost of the destruction of life and property, and which by a fiction is called to represent money and value; this producing inflation and expansion, has brought increase of prices and artificial wants to all the laboring classes, who, failing to supply their wants, both fancied and real, with the products of their toil, become restive and uneasy.

Strikes and lock-outs, crimination and recrimination, aggression and retaliation, follow in rapid succession, until both employer and employé become crippled, — the one by the loss of wages which he can ill afford, the other by interruption of business and the increased sensitiveness of the capitalist, by whose aid alone he is enabled to carry on his enterprise and employ his operatives. The fact that the manufacturer is as much dependent upon the capitalist as the humblest laborer, is lost almost entirely from sight.

The commonly accepted statement of the relations of labor and capital, as they are associated in business, has been nowhere so concisely stated as in a remark of Lord Derby, which is all the more remarkable as coming from a nobleman

of a proud family, and not generally credited with sympathy for the laboring classes. Said he, "Every man has the undoubted right to struggle for his own success, at whatever cost of inconvenience or failure to others; but the expediency or propriety of the matter is a question to be determined in each instance." According to this theory, success would undoubtedly follow the possession of the greatest resources or powers of endurance. Adopt this principle as the rule of action, and the propriety or expediency would be little discussed; the struggle of man against man, and interest against interest, would be bitter and exhausting; the very principle upon which our social system is founded would be disregarded and violated; man, thrown back upon his natural rights, would subvert the general good, that his individual benefit might accrue. This proposition is the basis of Feudalism, worthy of its aristocratic author, and can only be construed to justify the strong in a struggle against the weak, which, whenever it occurs, leaves the strong, stronger and more arrogant, and the weak, weaker and more embittered than before.

This question is aggravated by the injudicious efforts of the zealous and well-meaning persons, who, with a misconception of the most delicate relations which the different classes of society bear to each other, continually represent poverty as the greatest of human misfortunes, and an un-mixed evil.

If it be true, then should the possession of wealth be the height of earthly happiness and the goal of man's ambition.

Not having realized in their own experience what it is to be even in straitened pecuniary circumstances, they have unbounded sympathy for those who do not share in their abundance, and suffer its expression to degenerate into a morbid sentimentalism, which defeats its own best aspirations, and begets only discontent and agrarianism.

In the scarcity of positive information and data from which to form just conclusions, it is obvious that errors will arise; but in the general attention which the subject awakens, we find our greatest encouragement of the ultimate amelioration of the condition of the sons of toil.

If you will take up the report of the labor statistics of this Commonwealth for the last year, and have the patience to examine it carefully throughout, you can scarcely fail to receive the impression that everything in our State that pertains to labor is all wrong. Agriculture languishes, and our farm laborers leave the rural districts for the superior inducements afforded in the manufacturing towns; and yet our artisans and operatives are ill-paid, and as poorly sheltered.

In the \$163,000,000 deposited in our savings-banks by 560,000 depositors, are seen no evident signs of thrift or prosperity. It argues that as no mechanic or laborer can, by any possibility, save \$500 in one year, should one chance to deposit so large an amount in that time, he is, of necessity, a capitalist or a master mechanic, and not a laborer for wages. With more than one-third of our population having savings on deposit, and three-fifths in the enjoyment of sufficient

property to attract the attention of the assessor, for taxation, it asserts that the wages of labor are inadequate to the support of the laborer and his family. It assumes, that for one to gain and hold a year's income in reserve, is to take himself out of the laboring classes, because he is not immediately dependent upon his daily labor for his daily bread, which sufficiently proves that labor and poverty must necessarily be attendant one upon the other.

This report contains an instructive mass of statistics, computations, averages, statements, and suggestions, drawn from every imaginable source, from the census to the celestial. Its records of fact are a valuable contribution to industrial statistics, and the care and labor bestowed upon them cannot be too highly commended; but its theories and deductions are open to criticism, if not to animadversion.

If its tables of wages at various times are correct, by assumed and arbitrary estimates of the supplies consumed in the family, it would appear that the great mass of our operatives, laborers, and journeymen mechanics have been continually growing poorer and poorer; or, to use the language of the report (p. 538), "The great body of working people, from the date of the organization of wage-labor, has only kept along on a general level with their earnings, — they, however, barely paying their way, and being oftener in debt than out of debt." Curious result; it proves too much; the experience of the community is against it, and the report itself, on a previous page, tells us that "Industry prospers, because so many can afford to buy." The testimony of every

grocer, provision-dealer, or trader in any of the commodities consumed in the family, is uniformly that the humble laboring poor, our mechanics and operatives, know better what they want, and pay better for what they have, than the classes who call themselves genteel. If all the facts were known, it would, I doubt not, be ascertained that it is not among the laboring class alone that those are to be found who fail to live upon or within their income, but oftenest among those who live in a more pretentious style, and who would resent the intimation that labor was essential to their support. Is it necessary, in order to show that some classes of labor are not adequately remunerated or provided for, to assert that the great body of those below a master-workman have been oftener in debt than out of it, for seventy years; thus, drawing the balance of their support from their neighbors, by compulsion, and being consequently worse than paupers, or hardly better than knaves?

In a political convention two or three years ago, where the labor-reform question was discussed, it was found that of two delegations, consisting of nineteen persons, all but one had served an apprenticeship and wrought as journeymen; although, from small beginnings they had all advanced to a competence, and some to wealth.

The mechanic arts of this State, to-day, are in the hands and under the control of men who began life penniless, who have actually wrought their fortunes out of the solid stone, wood, and iron. To the truth of this statement scores who are present here to-day can bear me witness. But we find no

enumeration of the multitudes who have lived and wrought contentedly, who, by frugality and thrift, provided for their families comfortably, on much smaller wages than have been pronounced inadequate, and laid by something for adversity and the acquisition of a homestead.

It was my privilege to dwell for twenty-five years in the home of a journeyman mechanic. Having by years of toil acquired a small property, he ventured into business for himself, but the commercial revulsion of 1840 swept away his substance and left him penniless and almost destitute. Gathering together a few of his household goods, he took his little family and came to this city, where, with an income that was at first but \$1 per day, which at no time exceeded \$2.50, and, including loss of time by illness and want of employment, did not average \$1.50 per day for over twenty years, he supported a family, consisting a large portion of the time of five persons, comfortably and even generously. Eight years of industry and economy enabled him to acquire the equity — small, it is true — in a homestead; subsequently he added a little plot of land that he might gratify his taste in the cultivation of fruits and flowers. His wants were few and simple, and the care of his garden furnished his favorite recreation. That unpretending home was the abode of temperance, contentment, and peace; there were no envyings or grievings at the goods or abundance of others, but, morning and evening, the prayer of thankfulness ascended to the Giver of all good, for his mercies and benefits. Sickness, long and wearisome, came with its heavy burdens; death, too, with its bitter sor-

rows, made its vacant places in home and heart ; still arose that father's grateful prayer, as he toiled steadily on. There was another in that household, — a patient, careful, loving mother, — by whose frugality and tact much was often made of little, and to whom wastefulness was unknown. By her, were instilled into those young hearts, lessons which are nowhere taught so tenderly as at a mother's knee, lessons which lead to lives of usefulness, and that "faith, like an anchor sure and steadfast, which leadeth within the vail." Encouraged in their studies, they made suitable proficiency in the public schools, and were there qualified for wider and more active duties in life ; but whether in school or sanctuary, they were found in their accustomed places with equal regularity.

In that home the poor and distressed found comfort and relief, and none were turned empty-handed away. Death came at last, and found that father at his labor. Borne from the bench to the bier, he left a character for temperance, industry, and integrity, as a precious legacy, and of him it might truly be said that, "without any estate or gainful calling, he reared a * * * family reputably."

To-day, the only survivor of that once happy household, as I look back upon its scenes of peaceful enjoyment and unalloyed content, I can truly and deeply feel that success is only comparative ; that he is the most truly successful who adds his contribution to the productive forces of the community ; gauges his wants by his ability to acquire ; trains his offspring for a higher sphere of usefulness ; and,

dying in the assurance of a blessed immortality, leaves them the tenderest remembrances of a happy, cheerful home.

Standing upon the banks of the St. Lawrence on a summer's day, we see a body of water inconceivable to the imagination, and to be comprehended only by the aid of figures, estimated to be more than 150,000,000 of gallons per minute, — a volume which would supply the city of Boston for eight days, — passing in a moment of time, swelling grandly to the sea, bearing on its broad bosom at once the ocean steamer and the lumberman's raft. How many would imagine that the sun and air, by their unseen but potent agencies, were quietly absorbing from the surface of the lakes which form the sources of that river, just twice the quantity which so amazes us by its immensity ! We see the river to-day, to-morrow, or a year hence ; it is still the same broad, deep, rolling stream, hurrying onward ; we do not perceive that other river, greater in volume, which ascends on its mission of regeneration, peacefully and mysteriously dissipating into clouds, to soar away, until, distilling in gentle showers, it moistens the parched soil, gladdens all nature, and causes the earth to give forth her increase. So, as we look forth upon the swelling tide of humanity struggling and toiling around us, by all the means we have to estimate it, the mass appears the same, but we fail to appreciate the multitudes who have been quietly and continually promoted to higher posts of duty and broader spheres of usefulness.

It is neither politic nor sensible to undertake or advocate reforms by indiscriminately decrying established usages or in-

stitutions ; it is far easier to embitter prejudices than to correct abuses.

The labor question, as generally agitated, resolves itself into a very simple proposition, — that every one will endeavor to procure the greatest possible return for the least amount of toil ; and unemployed leisure, although coveted and sought, is not desirable or advantageous either to the individual or to the community. The cupidity of man will always tempt the strong to oppress the weak, and this is no less true of individuals than of corporations. The laborer is worthy of his hire, and the hire should be worthy of the laborer. If the tenements furnished by individuals or companies to their operatives are unsuitable or unwholesome for habitations, we have laws already which would require their owners to render them habitable at once, or cause them to be condemned and vacated.

There can be no legal enactments regulating the duration or compensation of one's labor.

Laws may punish dishonesty and fraud, but they cannot be made to prevent men from driving hard bargains ; they may confine the criminal, but fail to effect those moral and social conditions of life which, while they promote present gratification and enjoyment, but too surely foster crime. While men postpone repentance until the hour of dissolution, they will disregard all duties which conflict with present comfort or accumulation, even though their failure should precipitate us into the direful consequences of domestic disorder. So we, as a community, may unconsciously permit and con-

tinue an unnatural condition of the relations of business and industry, which may promote the present prosperity of the majority, giving them wealth and luxury, while they bring only penury and privation to a large minority. Judged by Lord Derby's philosophy, this seems to be right; measured by the democratic precept, which has caused so much of oppression and sorrow, "the greatest good of the greatest number," it still holds good; but tested by the golden rule, which men will yet find it profitable to apply to all their transactions, "do unto others as you would have others do unto you," and we then realize that no community, however prosperous, can afford to allow any of the humblest of its members to suffer real or fancied grievances without doing something to remove the cause. This cannot be done by any utopian schemes or spasmodic labors of philanthropy, which are seldom made until the time for prevention has passed. The revolutions of society have generations for their cycles, and the philosophy of life can only be understood by comparison of cause and effect extending through a long series of years; this creates the necessity for records and statistics, and that watchful observers should register the ebb and flow of daily life.

The general government has, with wise provisions for commercial interests, detailed its signal corps, — men trained to watch the movements of the adversary in war, — to note the adverse movements of the elements in time of peace. Dispersed all over the land, they watch the rise and fall of the barometer, the moisture of the air, fall of rain, direction

and force of the wind. These data are recorded and concentrated before an experienced observer, who is thus enabled, with his practised eye, to see the storm-waves vibrating over the face of the earth in gigantic oscillations. Long-continued observation has shown him that mountain ranges, coasts, and valleys regulate the flow of the atmospheric currents, and direct the course of storms. It is by these means that the weather probabilities are sent abroad to every town and hamlet within reach of a telegraph or newspaper. We are told on the morning of a crisp autumn day that cautionary signals are ordered at Buffalo, and to be discontinued at Milwaukee, and that there will be a falling barometer in New England, with milder weather. Sure enough, the weather grows warmer ; that familiar wind sets in, which the weather-wise predict will blow up rain, and the next day comes our well-known south-westerly storm : the observer had watched its progress from the Rocky Mountains, recognized its familiar features, and could predict, with positive certainty, its rate of progress and ultimate destination.

This Association should have its own observer, watching the signs of the times. Calm, dispassionate, free from theories or dreams of hastening the millennium, he should carefully observe the elements of our social and business life, and its changes for better or for worse. Accredited as our agent, he would have unsurpassed advantages to pursue his investigations in fields that have been and must of necessity be otherwise closed to the public eye. If this be done liberally and conscientiously, a few years will give us surprising

results, and we should soon have some of the conditions without which little advance can be made in solving the questions arising from the relations of labor.

We must endeavor by all means to cheapen the cost of living ; it is better to accomplish this than to raise the wages to the same extent. For this purpose our railway system, now measuring 1,600 miles and costing \$70,000,000, should transport, at the very lowest rate, articles of food, and those who labor, when going to and from their employment. Everything should be done by free markets or similar measures, to diminish the number of those who stand between the producer and the consumer, each taking his profit without adding to the value of the merchandise. So reckless and wicked have become the practices of some of these, that they will wantonly suffer half of their perishable goods to decay and go to waste, rather than abate the price upon what they sell. It is notorious, that loads and loads of fruit and vegetables have thus gone to the swine or the compost heap, as the result of some corner in which the dealers in cabbages have been emulating their prototypes in the corn or stock exchange.

The English and German manufacturers have been successfully trying the experiment of withdrawing their establishments from the large centres of population, with their allurements of vice and dissipation, to some quiet rural spot where the free air of heaven comes sweet from the fields, and where the landscape and garden furnish a continued pleasure to the eye. Habitations are furnished that are not only

comfortable, but attractive and home-like; amusements, which elevate and instruct, while they furnish wholesome diversion; lectures and schools for instruction; chapels for devotion; hospitals for the sick, and a quiet, welcome retreat for the decayed and superannuated, who, having spent their lives in toil, would otherwise find themselves, by stress of circumstances, stranded upon the shores of time, dependent upon charity for support in their declining years. These asylums are sometimes supported by a slight tax paid by the operatives themselves; at others, by the proprietors, who regard them as a part of the reasonable expense of their business, — not as a charity, but arising from the obligation to care for faithful servants when overtaken by misfortune.

Participation in the profits of business, based upon the length of service and degree of application on the part of the operative, promises and has realized the best results. These methods are susceptible of wide and useful application, and are in keeping with the character and temper of our people.

The principle of coöperation among workmen themselves in the conduct of mechanical operations, has been singularly successful in European countries, while it has been equally disastrous with us. This arises from no want of able men, but from their rapid promotion. Where the opportunities for advancement are few, and the depressing influence of caste wide-spread, there are to be found, in the humblest walks in life, men with fixed integrity of principles, and great powers of administration. Such men have been entrusted with the management of large affairs by their fellow-

workmen ; they have not been impeded or over-ruled by those with more zeal than knowledge, and they have made the coöperative stores and factories of Great Britain commercial powers, and are furnishing timely relief to thousands of their fellow-workmen.

In this country the change is manifest ; every man imagines that he is a born leader ; where there should be one head, two hands, and two feet, they would have four heads, one hand, and no feet ; they object to a menial duty, because that is degrading. The result has been witnessed. Nearly thirty years ago a vigorous effort was made to establish coöperative stores, under the name of the New-England Protective Unions ; they were started as associations, with just enough of secrecy to make them fascinating and attractive. There were not so many Masons, Odd-Fellows, Sons-of-Temperance, Good-Templars, Native-Americans, Leagues, Orders, and Knights as there are to-day, and the societies spread rapidly and flourished greatly. From their contributions and assessments they formed a capital, purchased goods, and opened a room on Saturday evenings ; the brethren issued the goods, at a small advance above cost, to members' families, exclusively for cash ; business increased, and they enlarged their rooms, opened them on Wednesday evenings, then Wednesday and Saturday afternoons, and, finally, after a few months, the store was open the entire week, with its superintendent and clerks. Trade was prosperous, and the membership and capital grew rapidly. Soon the different unions formed a confederation, chose a journeyman tailor as

their general purchasing agent, and in his little back shop they consolidated their orders and sent him into the market to buy their goods on their own account. Their selection fell upon a good man, upright in his dealings, called by the trade a shrewd buyer ; his time was soon so much occupied that he was voted a salary, which was finally changed to a commission ; a central store was opened, and for a few years everything flourished ; the unions numbered more than one hundred, and their annual dealings with the general agent amounted to \$1,000,000, which was not more than one-half of their trade. Their prosperity proved their ruin ; while it was up-hill work there was a careful supervision over the agents and the funds ; but with success came negligence and looseness of accounts ; the charge of affairs fell into the hands of men who always managed their own business to death ; cliques sprang up, for where there were three or four irrepressible parties, only one could prevail. The inevitable wire-puller saw that in an association of two or three hundred humble and inexperienced men was an excellent field to ply his arts for political purposes, and he succeeded ; the funds of the unions were dissipated, squandered, and stolen ; the societies broken up, many of them bankrupt, and the members who were personally liable took charge of the wreck ; some were continued as private stores, and the general agent lost large sums by his advances of goods to unions before they were known to be insolvent. Gradually the whole system faded away, and left him with a large trade, well established, and he is to-day a prosperous, wealthy, and respected commission merchant.

Twenty years ago a large mechanical establishment was founded on the coöperative principle in this city ; its members had all the incentives that come from self-interest ; the officers were men of ability, and as much integrity as such men will average. The enterprise prospered for a time, until the managers found that they could as well conduct a business for themselves, for their own exclusive benefit, as to share the profits with others. Actuated by the universal law of self-interest, they deserted their associates, built up a new concern, and left the old one to languish and die disastrously.

By a law passed in 1866, seven or more persons were authorized to form associations for manufacturing or trade, with certain restrictions and privileges. According to the returns made to the Secretary of State in November, 1869, there were 25 such coöperative associations, having a total capital and other property of \$190,979.78, and liabilities amounting to \$108,909.47. Some of these have already become bankrupt, and the law has since been repealed.

If we would influence posterity most deeply, it must be done by the instruction of the young. We have teaching and instruction enough in our public schools. We want in addition, training and culture, — that matter-of-fact kind of knowledge which guided our fathers with its unerring truth, and without which even great scientific attainments and technical proficiëncy become unwieldy and plague their possessors.

No amount of knowledge can be made practically useful in the business of life, that is not based upon a good, sound substratum of common sense. Confused by too much learn-

ing, men are every day working out the most absurd conclusions, which a little practical judgment or experience would demonstrate in a moment. I find it to be no uncommon thing, and not considered discreditable among the graduates of our higher institutes and schools, to offer it as an excuse for not comprehending either some new problem or a novel combination of old ones, "that they did not study that at school," or had only learned it to be forgotten.

We must train the young to habits of independent thought and careful observation of the physical and social conditions which surround them. Burdened with unmanageable learning, they degenerate into abstract theorists or visionary schemers. We must teach them self-respect; not that insolent assurance, which, in the language of the street, is aptly called "cheek," but that conscious dignity which becomes a freeman invested with the proudest privileges which the world has ever known.

With the rapid increase of numbers, comes a corresponding decrease of the ratio of the individual to the whole; it entails the deadening effect of conscious insignificance, which continually counteracts that confident self-reliance which is as essential in working out one's fortune as any other element of character, or skill in handicraft.

Encourage the children to be useful and industrious; show them how to live, and you have secured the happiness of the next generation. There is more in the art of living than is generally thought of. In this country abundance and plenty have engendered wastefulness and extravagance. A French

or German family will subsist comfortably on what is wasted in many of our homes, and would fare sumptuously where American families consider themselves stinted, if not starved. This art of living is better understood by some than by others, and is the true secret of many an individual success.

Encourage honesty, because it is the better principle. If it is inculcated as the best policy, the tempter invariably debates the policy just when and where it is most alluring, and the risk of evil consequences apparently smallest; he is an artful debater, and too often prevails, to the sacrifice of honesty, family, friendship, and the future.

Where the river flows broad and calm, with its shallow shores, there we find a solitude unbroken save by the gun of the sportsman, or the lonely cry of the loon; but where the fall and rapid vex its current, there gather the busy throng of workers, with the hum of industry, changing its waters to a perennial stream of wealth and prosperity. I have walked through the busy streets of a strange city, and, unacquainted with its commerce or sources of industry, have wondered how and where its swarming people gained their livelihood. The appearance of their homes and children denoted comfort and thrift, but the noon-day bustle of its streets, or the noisy clatter of its looms and hammers, failed to impress me with an adequate sense of the sources of subsistence for so great a multitude. But when I go to the warehouses and docks; when I see them piled high with bundles and bales, packages and cases, all gathered from these various laboratories; when I see steamers, ships, and

barges loaded with merchandise, and the laboring engine drawing its long train of burdened cars; when I consider that without manufacturing industry and enterprise, all this commercial activity would cease, and stagnation brood over all our ports, then I get an adequate notion of the magnitude of their interests and sources of wealth.

Thus is our attention more engaged with the operations of commerce, because of its greater apparent activity, although the quiet and unassuming labors of the artisan and the mechanician, which we so readily overlook, are all that give it life. We believe that these agencies will ultimately achieve their perfect work, each with their respective functions weaving the web of life in all its varied patterns, with its peculiar thread, until there shall finally be accomplished the emancipation of the oppressed, the relief of the distressed, the ennobling of man, and the glory of God.

THE
 TWENTY-SECOND TRIENNIAL FESTIVAL
 OF THE
Massachusetts Charitable Mechanic Association,
 WAS CELEBRATED AT THE
 Music Hall, on Monday Evening, Oct. 21, 1872.

The members of the Association, with their ladies and invited guests, assembled at half-past six o'clock in the large hall. The Germania Band enlivened the early part of the evening, and the intervals, with the performance of choice selections of music. The Temple Quartette Club sang very acceptably a number of odes, and led the audience in the following, written by Epes Sargent, Esq., for the Festival in 1848.

ODE.

God bless our native land!
 Prosper the toiling band
 Of every clime!
 Bid all good efforts speed,
 Whether by word or deed,
 Till all mankind are freed
 From want and crime!

Oh! if to earth is given
 One certain type of heaven,
 One sacred fire,—
 'Tis when the kindling sign
 Of Charity divine
 Glows on the true heart's shrine,—
 Glows to inspire!

Then, Lord, our fathers' Lord,
 Thy gracious smile accord.
 Thy Spirit send!
 Quicken our faltering zeal,
 May we, in woe or weal,
 For others' suffering feel,
 Feel, and befriend!

We of ourselves are weak,
 But in thy love we seek
 Wisdom and might:
 All that is good in Art
 Thou and thy works impart;
 Grateful be every heart!
 God speed the Right!

The President, ALBERT J. WRIGHT, gave an address of welcome, seasoned with much wit and wisdom, and the Rev. GEORGE W. BLAGDEN, D.D., invoked the Divine blessing upon the institution, and prayed for its success in every good and holy enterprise.

The address, by HENRY W. WILSON, Esq., occupied nearly an hour in its delivery, and received the marked attention and spontaneous approval of the audience.

A collation in the lower (Bumstead) Hall, followed the services above, and a Social Gathering of the families of members and their friends, at which dancing was introduced, was held in the large hall.

The duties and the pleasures of the occasion were brought to a close at about eleven o'clock.



